

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DHAHRA 00304 01 OF 02 251631 Z

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DHAHRAN 0304/1

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, SA

FROM CHARGE

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

DOD FOR ISA

SUBJECT: MODA PRINCE SULTAN ASKS US TO AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO
CONSIDER SALE OF PHANTOMS TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF: DHAHRAN 0303

SUMMARY: DURING MEETING WITH CINCEUR GENERAL GOODPASTER, MODA PRINCE SULTAN STATED THAT HE WAS OFFICIALLY AUTHORIZED BY KING TO REQUEST SALE TO SAG OF F-4 PHANTOMS. IN REPLY GENERAL GOODPASTER POINTED OUT THAT WHILE BOTH F-4 AND F-5 EXCELLENT AIRCRAFT, VALUE OF AN AIRCRAFT DEPENDED UPON NATURE OF ITS MISSION. F5 WELL CONCEIVED FOR SAUX ARABIAN AND HE THOUGHT MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS OF F-4 MAY BE MORE COMPLEX. SAG SHOULD UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDER DIVERSION OF MANPOWER ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF PEACE HAWK, SAUDI NAVAL EXPANSION PROGRAM (SNEP), AND OTHER PROGRAMS. SULTAN AGREED THAT MANPOWER CRUCIAL AND THAT F-4 ISSUE WOULD REQUIRE CAREFUL AND DETAILED CONSIDERATION. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT,
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PAGE 02 DHAHRA 00304 01 OF 02 251631 Z

HOWEVER, WAS THAT US AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO CONSIDER SALE OF F4'S TO SAG. COMMENTS WILL FOLLOW SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY

1. AT BEGINNING OF MEETING WITH CINCEUR GOODPASTER APRIL 24 (ALTENDED ALSO BY CHARGE HORAN, POLAD LONG, EX OFF CAPT SMEDBERG, CHUSMTM BRIG GEN O. E. SMITH A NUMBER OF SAUDI OFFICERS) MODA PRINCE SULTAN EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE AT REPORT THAT GENERAL'S MEETING WITH KING FAISAL HAD BEEN UNUSUALLY SUCCESSFUL AND WELL RECEIVED (REFTTEL). SINCE KING, HOWEVER, HAD PRESUMABLY DISCUSSED QUESTIONS OF POLICY WITH GENERAL, HE, PRINCE SULTAN, WOULD CONFINE HIMSELF TO DISCUSSION OF STRICTLY MILILARY AFFAIRS. ALSO, SINCE IT WAS NOT OFTEN THAT HE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH SUCH A HIGH RANKING US OFFICER, HE WOULD TAKE PAINS TO SPEAK FRANKLY AND AS A FRIEND.

2. SULTAN STATED THAT MODA'S ANALYSTS STRESSED THAT KINGDOM'S DEFENSES DEPENDED ON POWERFUL, MOBILE GROUND FORCES, AND A STRONG AIR FORCE. WITH RESPECT TO PEACE HAWK PROGRAM, HE WAS HAPPY TO SAY THAT HE HAD NO COMPLAINTS OR CRITICAL COMMENTS TO MAKE WHATSOEVER. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, CONSIDERATIONS OF FUTURE SECURITY-- IN VIEW OF HUGE SIZE OF KINGDOM AND VULNERABILITY OF ITS PERIPHERY-- LED TO FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVES: (A) NUMBER OF RSAF BASES SHOULD BE APPROXIMATELY DOUBLED, WITH CONCOMITANT INCREASE IN NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT AND PERSONNEL, OR (B) SAG SHOULD COMMIT ITSELF TO PURCHASE OF LONGER RANGE AIRCRAFT WHICH COULD INTERDICT HOSTILE AIR PRESENCE OVER ARABIAN PENINSULA AND ALSO-- BY ITS VERY PRESENCE-- DETER HOSTILE MILITARY INTENTIONS BY ANY OF SAUDI ARABIA'S NEIGHBORS. IN VIEW OF THESE FACTORS, SULTAN WISHED TO INFORM GENERAL GOODPASTER THAT SAG CHOICE WAS OPTION (B) ABOVE AND THAT HE WAS SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZED BY KING FAISAL OFFICIALLY TO REQUEST SALE TO SAG OF THE F-4 PHANTOMS.

3. IN REPLY, GENERAL GOODPASTER STATED THAT SUCH A REQUEST BY SAG REQUIRED AND INDEED WOULD RECEIVE DETAILED AND CAREFUL STUDY. HE NOTED HOWEVER, THAT WHILE F-4 WAS UNDOUBTEDLY EXCELLENT, HIGH-PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT-- AS WAS F-5-- SUITABILITY OF AN AIRCRAFT TO A COUNTRY'S DEFENSE NEEDS DEPENDED PRIMARILY ON A DEFINITION OF AIRCRAFT'S PROBABLE MISSION. IN THIS RESPECT THERE WERE SOME AREAS IN WHICH "PERFORMANCE ENVELOPE" OF F-4 SUPERIOR TO THAT OF F5, AND OTHERS IN WHICH F-5 MAY
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PAGE 03 DHAHRA 00304 01 OF 02 251631 Z

BE BEST SUITED TO SAUDI MILILARY NEEDS. PEACE HAWK PROGRAM (WHICH HE NOTED HAD 30 UNITS STILL TO BE DELIVERED) WOULD, WHEN COMPLETE, PROVIDE KINGDOM WITH WELL-CONCEIVED MOBILE AIR DEFENSE NEEDED TO FACE THREAT FROM VARIOUS QUARTERS. HE SAID HE THOUGHT MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS OF F-4 MAY BE CONSIDERABLY GREATER AND MORE COMPLEX THAN OF F-5.

4. CHARGE COMMENTED THAT US RELATIONSHIP WITH RSAF MOTIVATED BY OUR OUR DESIRE TO PROVIDE SAG WITH BEST AND MOST APPROPRIATE FIGHTING ARM POSSIBLE. IN THIS PROCESS IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT ACQUISITION OF AIRCRAFT PROCEED IN ORDERLY FASHION, COORDINATED WITH DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES OF PROGRAM. IT WAS IN TRAINED PERSONNEL THAT TRUE STRENGTH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AN AIR FORCE ULTIMATELY LAY. GENERAL GOODPASTER ADDED THAT IN THIS REGARD IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT ANY PLANE THAT MODA MIGHT ENVISAGE FOR FURTHER RSAF DEVELOPMENT NOT DETRACT FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES ESSENTIAL TO CONTINUED SUCCESSFUL EXECUTION OF F-5 PROGRAM AND OTHERS, SUCH AS SNEP. HE WAS NOT PRIMARILY AN AIRMAN, BUT THIS MIGHT BE A MATTER ON WHICH HIS DEPUTY, GENERAL EADE, WOULD BE COMPETENT TO GIVE ADVICE.

5. SULTAN AGREED WITH THESE POINTS. HE HAD NO DESIRE TO PILE UP "HEAPS OF IRON" IN THE DESERT, NOR DID HE WANT TO HAZARD ANY ASPECT OF PEACE HAWK OPERATIONS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE NOT A PILOT HIMSELF, HE WAS A DIRECTOR AND LEADER OF MILITARY PROGRAMS; AS SUCH HE COULD POINT TO RECORD OF CONSIDERABLE SAUDI TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENTS. YEARS AGO RSAF HAD BEGUN WITH F-86'S, AND THEN GONE ON TO LIGHTNINGS. THIS ADVANCE HAD TAKEN STUDY, TIME, PREPARATION, AND TRAINING. RSAF SUBSEQUENTLY TOOK FURTHER STEP FROM LIGHTNING TO PRESENT F-5 PROGRAM; WITHOUT THIS SPIRIT OF PROGRESS AND INITIATIVE, RSAF MIGHT STILL BE ALL F-86'S.

6. SULTAN WANTED TO STRESS HIS STRONG CONVICTION THAT SAUDI YOUTH NO LESS TALENTED OR PATRIOTIC THAN THAT OF ISRAEL OR IRAN. IN ADDITION, NEITHER OF THESE COUNTRIES WAS CLOSER FRIEND OF US THAN SAUDI ARABIA, NOR MORE IMPORTANT TO IT. FOR THESE REASONS SULTAN HOPED US WOULD CONSIDER HIS REQUEST SYMPATHETICALLY.

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PAGE 01 DHAHRA 00304 02 OF 02 251559 Z

52
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 DHAHRAN 0304

EXDIS

7. SULTAN CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT IMMEDIATE US AGREEMENT TO SALE. F-5 PROGRAM HAD BEEN STUDIED FOR 2 YEARS, BEEN OPERATING FOR ONE YEAR, AND STILL HAD SEVERAL YEARS TO GO. HE WOULD UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY IF APPROPRIATE PERIOD OF STUDY AND REVIEW WERE TO PRECEDE A US DECISION ON MATTER. BUT WHAT IMPORTANT TO SAG WAS EARLY US AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO CONSIDER SALE OF F-4 PHANTOMS. BAHT

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